the Link

Concordia University
Montreal, Quebec

Volume 6, Number 41
Wednesday, April 9, 1986

Stop the cuts!

by Jennifer Feinberg

It's the same old song ending on the same sour note.

Concordia has long been recognized as the most chronically underfunded university in the province. The government has promised bailout money to adjust the historic inequities.

Promises, promises.

Just when we thought we were finally clear of the nefarious effects of constant budgetary compression and repression, the Liberal government renegs on its committment to higher education and unveils a whole slew of new cutbacks.

Reaction to the proposed $15.5 million reduction in university base funding is ranging from outrage to resigned disappointment.

The administration refuses to say precisely what effect the cuts will have on Concordia, but everyone agrees the news couldn't be worse.

Concordia officials will meet with the provincial government and various departments in the university for consultation on how Concordia will absorb the blow.

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Special strike edition Special strike edition

Liberals send up trial balloons

by Peter Wheeland

One of the games that politicians like at budget time is called "let's play trial balloons."

Early in March, Liberal Finance Minister Gerald D. Levesque announced to the media that he was considering a large series of "expenditure reduction" and "renevue generating" schemes in order to reduce the province's deficit. The proposed cuts and user fees affected almost every spectrum of society, especially in the health, education and social service networks.

News Analysis

Immediately following the announcement, all of the affected "user" and lobby groups set their publicity and lobbying teams in action, all competing for the attention and support of the public. The game had begun.

Survival of the fittest

"Trial balloons" are used to gauge how much support and sympathy the public and media has for the groups affected by government reforms. In the ensuing battle for positive press coverage, the government will quickly identify which areas they can cut without too much public outcry and which groups are capable of rallying the public against the government initiatives.

The result of this Darwinian public relations battle will guide the government in preparing its budget, allowing the groups with the "fittest" p.r. campaign to survive the cuts. Those groups which don't organise, lobby, yell and scream will almost certainly find themselves victims of the government budget "hypothese".

This game plan can be clearly illustrated in this and previous provincial budget preparation exercises.

In 1984, a confidential Treasury Board document was "leaked" to the Canadian Press wire service a month before the budget was to be presented. The document revealed that among the "hypotheses" being studied were tuition fees in CEGEPs, increased tuition fees in universities, increased tuition for international students, conversion of $ 24 millions of student bursaries to loans, large cuts in operating grants for colleges and universities, etc.

The student movement reacted quickly, condemning the proposals as direct attacks on the quality and accessibility of education and launching a series of student strikes and protest actions. The government responded with a p.r. counter-attack, saying Quebec students were "privileged" and that they should be prepared to bear the burden being imposed on them. This further heated up student action and reaction.

And then the government announced that the Treasury Board document was merely a "hypothesis" and that, of course, the government would not impose tuition fees in CEGEPs or raise them in universities. But they would raise tuition for international students to $5,800 per year - picking on the student group which was the least organised and which had the least public sympathy.

This year's battle of the budget began with a press conference given by Finance Minister Gerald D. [illegible] of "options" [illegible]ancing a vast range being explored to trim expenses and increase revenues.

Up go the first balloons, including a proposal to raise tuition fees. Once again students, among others, reacted quickly and angrily and the "grocery list" was trimmed down.

Then when Treasury Board President Paul Gobeil announced late last month that he would be slashing a total of $ 39.5 millions from university and financial aid budgets, he was putting into action one of a dozen back-up plans the Board had developped over the last ten years.

Gone were the proposals for increased tuition fees and in their place was a $24 million cut in the student financial aid budget. This move allowed the government to avoid angering all Quebec university students, angering only those who rely on financial aid for their studies. At the same time, by making the savings through converting student bursaries into increased student loans, the government could argue it was "lending students more money and giving away less." The first shot in the second round of the public sympathy campaign.

The new move to reduce university operating grants by $15.5 million, not one of Levesque's original "options", came as a complete suprise, especially since it was a direct contradiction of Liberal campaign promises. Here again, the students who feared higher tuition fees were relieved and it was the universities themselves who were angered. As long as the government could play off the financial needs of universities against rising tuition fees, pitting students against their own institutions, it could blame students for the underfunding of their universities.

So once more, the government has sent up further trial balloons. With another month to go before the budget is debated and adopted, the government is still trying to gauge how much opposition there could be to their policies.

If previous budgets and p.r. battles are any indication, the proposals are only a *fait accompli* if students stay quiet. In the eyes of government, silence is an indication of tacit approval.

Sixties tuition freeze

by Peter Wheeland

Tuition in Quebec has been frozen at about $450 a year since 1969, easily making them the lowest fees in Canada. In the past few years, the tuition "freeze" has often been called into question and the government has almost annually tested the waters of public opinion by publically pondering the possibility of a tuition "thaw".

Why do Quebec students benefit from the lowest tuition fees? The answer can be found in the history of Quebec and the QuietRevolution.

In the Duplessis years, education, especially post-secondary education, was considered a privilege that should be provided by either private schools or the church. The role of the state in education was severely limited, illustrated by the fact that there was not even a Ministry of Education until 1964.

With the death of Duplessis, the emergence of a growing French-Canadian professional class and the election of the Jean Lesage Liberals, government attitudes changed dramatically. One of the most important acts of the Lesage government was the creation of the "Parent Commission" which was mandated to review the entire Quebec educational system and propose a master plan for bringing Quebec public instruction into the 20th century.

The Parent Commission quickly realised that the "scholarisation" rate of French Quebecers was the lowest in Canada. Among other means which the Commission proposed for addressing this problem was the creation of a tuition-free

ANEQ calls for gene

by Jacquie Charlton and Jennifer Feinberg

Quebec's largest student group ANEQ is mobilizing to unite students across the province to protest the proposed $85 million in cuts to education.

All this week will see information-saturated general assemblies in many CEGEPs and universities. Some will include strike votes, others will put the emphasis on sensitizing students to the issues.

The Association Nationale des étudiants et étudiantes du Québec (ANEQ) has given up the hope of a gesture from any government to defend student rights.

When efforts were made by ANEQ Monday to gauge Liberal opinion of the proposed $85 million in education cutbacks, responses included that of Westmount MNA Richard French, who told students it was "too bad".

Bourassa himself was too busy to speak with students.

"We can't really see that they are much better (than the PQ), despite all their promises of commitment to education," ANEQ Executive member Francois Guiguère said of the Liberals.

"If we want to have some gains it will not be by discussing with some deputy or minister," he said, "but by putting pressure on them by demonstrating and protesting that we are not prepared to accept the cuts."

Despite the vacuum in govern-

Strike vote today

Should we stay or should we go?

by Jeff Heinrich

Students are being asked today to vote on a one-day strike to protest recent provincial government cutbacks in financing to Quebec universities.

CUSA has tabled the following resolution to be debated in today's general assemblies:

"Be it resolved that Concordia students voice their firm and unconditional opposition to cutbacks in university and student aid budgets by shutting down Concordia University for 24-hours on Tuesday, April 15."

A survey conducted by *the Link* suggests students are divided about CUSA's call to boycott classes next Tuesday.

The survey, conducted on the SGW campus on Monday, asked students: "If a strike by students was called Tuesday, April 15, would you attend class?"

Of some 99 students polled, 41 said they would participate in the strike and 58 said they wouldn't.

Some students said they would boycott their classes on principle.

"I don't believe in budget cuts," said Cinema & Photography Animation student Mark Smith.

Fine Arts student Chris Harrison feels the university has been cut back enough as it is.

"We should say 'no' to tuition hikes" said Nick Kossovan, a Journalism student.

For others, the timing of the strike couldn't have been worse.

"I have exams next week," said English student Tom Hicks, "so I can't afford it. Besides, I've skipped too many classes as it is."I just can't afford to miss a day, not at this time of year," said Fine Arts student Kathleen Menzies.

Still more students thought a day off was never a bad idea, especially at this time of year.

"I had such a good time at the South Africa boycott," said English student Chris Hand, "why not a class boycott? Could be fun!"

Many students expressed support for the proposed strike, even if they could not fit their actions to their words.

"What can I say?" said Civil Engineering student Glenn Kavanagh."That's our last class of the year. We have reviews coming up." "I'd boycott," said Fine Arts student Joy Birkson, "but my class that day is the only one I'm worried about this semester, and it's my last year. I've got to graduate."

At least a few students surveyed predicted a general strike would have little effect on the cuts. Some thought the gesture would be useless.

"The problem isn't the cuts," says Fine Arts student Paule Gelinas. "The problem is the distribution of funds for education. The money is there; it only has to be properly used." "I think sending more letters would make a bigger difference," said another Fine arts student, Annie Galaise.

Some even suggested that students don't pay enough for their education.

"Students have to pay their

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"If a strike by students was called for Tuesday, April 15, would you attend class anyway?"

	NO	YES
Fine Arts	11	16
Psychology	1	1
Biology	0	1
Languages	0	1
Mathematics	1	2
History	1	0
LAC	2	1
Early Childhood Education	0	1
Communications	1	2
Computer Science	5	6
APSS	0	2
Exercise Science	0	1
English	9	4
Commerce	4	2
Geography	0	1
Economics	1	2
Political Science	1	1
Engineering	3	12
Accounting	1	0
Applied Linguistics		1
Geology	0	2
TOTAL	41	58

(Survey conducted at SGW: Hall Bldg., Norris Bldg., Fine Arts Bldg.; afternoon of Monday, April 7, 1986)

symbolic

public college system (CEGEPs) which would eliminate the final year of high school and act as both technical training schools and as pre-university colleges.

When it was realised that even more drastic steps were required if French Quebecers were to catch up to the higher education participation rate of other Canadians, the Liberal government froze university tuition fees across the province in 1969.

Seventeen years later, the freeze is still in effect and Quebecers have made long strides in catching up to Ontario's participation rate.

Accesibility is key

The fight to eliminate tuition fees, or to at least keep them frozen, is based on the belief that financial barriers to education, just like user fees in medicine, discourage people from using educational services. This belief has been borne out by numerous studies and is perfectly illustrated by the rapid growth of Quebec's post-secondary enrollment compared to a much slower growth in Ontario.

It is for these reasons that the Parti Quebecois adopted a policy of free education at all levels in their first platform. This is also the reason why even the Quebec Liberal Party adopted, at its last Congress, a policy of maintaining the tuition freeze and eventually moving towards free education.

The second element of the accessibility formula is students financial aid, which should ideally cover tuition, studying and living costs. In theory, tuition levels are irrelevant if you have a financial aid system which provides all needy students with sufficient monies to cover these expenses.

Unfortunately, the current aid system neither serves all needy students nor does it provide adequate assistance. Major reforms would be necessary before the aid system could totally compensate for tuition fee levels. The cost of these reforms would also probably wipe out any extra revenues generated through higher tuition fees.

A recent report by Quebec's advisory Council of Universities, that Quebec universities have been severely underfunded by the Quebec government, decided to abandon the accessibility ideal, arguing that the crisis in unversity financing justified a 100% rise in tuition. After estimating that one-third of the new renevues would be returned to students through financial aid, the Council suggested the remainder be used to increase financing to universities.

The New Minister of Finance, Gerald D. Levesque, seemed to take up half of the Council's

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eral student strike

ment responses to youth so far, Giguère is confident the strike will impel the government to nix the planned cutbacks.

ANEQ is envisaging a two week long strike, although the province's university students are expected to be unenthusiastic about staying out that long.

Several CEGEPS such as Ste-Hyacinthe and Limoilou have voted to strike, mainly over the $24 million slashed from the bursary budget. Others such as Edouard Montpetit, a member of a rival student group, is planning a "study day".

CUSA organizers fear even a 24-hour strike will be too much at the crucial year-end time.

"There is not much we can do when the government decisions are made public when students are preparing for finals and writing papers," said Peter Wheeland, Communications V.P. for CUSA.

"We will wait for the students decision to come out of Wednesday's general assembly, then we can make an official call to strike."

Luc Jolicoeur, vice-president of the McGill student association,says the university will not be participating in any strikes at all.

"We can't ask students to miss their last class," he said. Protests for the beginning of next school year, information campaigns, direct approaches to the ministry of Education, and a study on accessibility to university are all planned, however.

1. Concordia University: Financial Situation at a Glance.

1978-9 Created in 1974, Concordia must wait until 1978-79 before a first adjustment of approximatively $2 million is granted to help narrow the gap between its base funding and the total subsidy available to other Quebec universities.

1979-80 the University is subject to further cuts of $2.97 million.

1980-81 the accumulated deficit reaches $4.2 million in 1980-81 despite stringent measures of restraint applied by the University administration.

1981-82 a further adjustment of $2.4 million allows the University to reduce its accumulated deficit to $2.3 million.

1982-83 Concordia is subject to cutback of $2.9 million; the deficit stands at $1.2 million.

1983-84 Another $4.5 million in government cuts sends the accumulated deficit to a new record of $6.2 million.

1984-85 the University is subject to compressions of $4.5 million and its accumulated deficit skyrockets to $17.2 million.

1985-86 Just as Concordia begins to make strides in cutting its accumulated deficit, the Bourassa government announces a further $85 million in cuts to education, which is likely to send the deficit soaring once again.

2. Highlights

Concordia University has a student/faculty ratio of 23 FTE (full time equivalent) students per faculty member (the Quebec average being 18.7).

Students at Concordia whose mother tongue is French make up approximately 20% of total 1984-85 student enrolment, while international students represent 3.6%.

Reaction to cuts ...

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"We're already on the edge, if we have to compress any more, the only place left to cut will be the budget for classroom and lab teaching," said Charles Bertrand, Dean of Arts and Science.

Bertrand said the cuts might mean difficulty in replacing chemicals and equipment and introducing lab fees in many departments from Communication Studies to Chemistry.

"It's anti-education, actually," said Bertrand, "We're concerned with providing quality education and it seems as if its becoming more and more diffficult to provide. The cuts might affect research but even more importantly, teaching will be affected."

"With across-the-board cuts, you run the risk of reducing teaching effectiveness," he said.

Other nightmare scenarios for the Arts and Science faculty include the elimination of science lab assistants and larger English composition classes.

Graham Martin, Vice Rector Services, said although it is impossible to foresee how Concordia will be affected, he will do everything to protect areas such as the university computers and library services.

"It's going to be more difficult to keep the buildings maintained," said J.P. Petolas, Physical Resources Vice Rector. "We've gone as far as we can go in terms of cutting, now we run the risk of affecting not only quality but services as well."

"We've been the most cost-conscious university in the province in proportion to our size. We've cut staff, expenses without endangering the university."

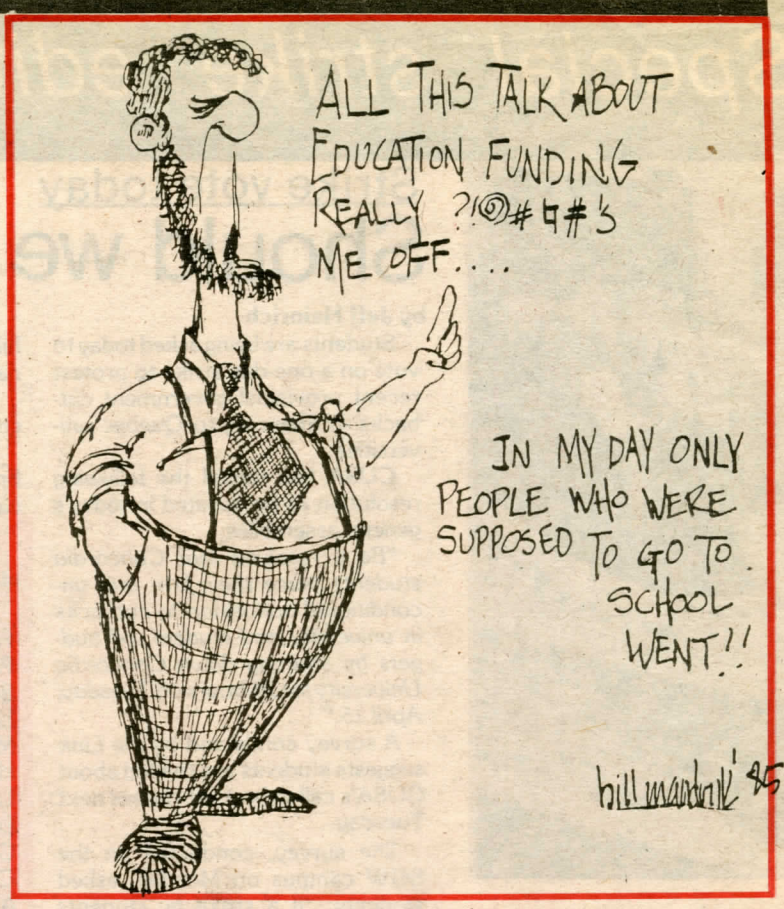
Petolas said that further restrictions on cleaning, air-conditioning and ventilation might have to be considered. Service contracts on elevators and escalators will be maintained however.

"The biggest problem is Concordia's historic underfunding," said CUSA co-president Scott White, "which has translated into a second class status for this university. We were expecting an increase, not a new set of cuts. Concordia has long been in line for retribution for past wrongs."

White urges all students to attend the assembly today at Loyola Campus Centre at 11:30 a.m. and in H-110 at 2:30 p.m. even if they are not in favour of a strike.

"This round of cuts will represent a serious gouging. There hasn't been any fat to cut for years, now we're cutting into the bone," he said.

Because of reductions imposed by the Quebec government, Concordia is forced to operate on a budget that is almost 20% less in real dollars than it was four years ago.


ALL THIS TALK ABOUT EDUCATION FUNDING REALLY ?!@#$#'S ME OFF....
IN MY DAY ONLY PEOPLE WHO WERE SUPPOSED TO GO TO SCHOOL WENT!!
bill mardonk '85

CRISIS FOR CONCORDIA

The Québec government has announced that it wants to slash millions from the budgets of student aid and universities next year.

The financial aid cuts affect one-third of Concordia's full-time students and the cuts in university operating grants could have disastrous consequences for the quality and quantity of teaching at Concordia.

Concordia students are prepared to act **now** to protect their future. Among other protest measures being looked is a 24-hour Concordia student strike on April 15.

All this and more will be the subject of **decisional general meetings** of the Concordia University Students' Association.

The Agenda for the meetings are:

1- Exposé of the effects of the proposed cuts to student aid and university operating grants.
2- General Discussion
3- Debate on the proposed resolution:

"BE IT RESOLVED that Concordia students' voice their firm and unconditional opposition to cutbacks in university and student aid budgets by shutting down Concordia University for 24-hours on Tuesday, April 15."

4-Other resolutions
5- Adjournment

All Concordia undergraduate students are entitled to vote. Please bring a valid I.D. card or proof of registration.

Student General Assemblies

Wednesday, April 9

11:30, Loyola Campus Centre

2:30, Sir George H-110

Tuition ...

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suggestion when he announced in early March that he was willing to consider a raise in tuition fees as part of a series of measures designed to increase government revenues. Nowhere did Levesque suggest the money would see its way back to universities, nor would he. His suggestion that fees could be raised was made in the context of reducing the deficit. You don't reduce the deficit by increasing both revenues and expenses at the same time.

The Levesque suggestion also implied that the Liberals were already willing to break party policy and election platforms in their first budget. These factors, combined with protests from students and Young Liberals, saw the debate die once more.

What's in the cards?

To fee or not to fee, that is the question which Quebec's political parties must face. The imposition of the "freeze" in 1969 has meant that any step away from the freeze is a significant policy change. Even a token rise in fees would spark protests because students would realise it would break open the floodgates for future increases.

Damned if you, damned if you don't. The freeze has become a historic cornerstone of Quebec's commitment to accessible education. For the products of the quiet revolution, it represents more than a few hundred dollars — it represents the hope and the belief that someday all qualified students will be able to attend university, to learn a profession which will help them become independent, productive and proud members of the Quebec community.

The symbolic importance of the freeze has become more sacred than even the quality of education to which it provides access.

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Unfortunately, the current aid system neither serves all needy students nor does it provide adequate assistance. Major reforms would be necessary before the aid system could totally compensate for tuition fee levels. The cost of these reforms would also probably wipe out any extra revenues generated through higher tuition fees..

A recent report by Quebec's advisory Council of Universities, noting that Quebec universities have been severely underfunded by the Quebec government, decided to abandon the accessibility ideal, arguing that the crisis in university financing justified a 100% rise in tuition. After estimating that one-third of the new revenues would be returned to students through financial aid, the Council suggested the remainder be used to increase financing to universities.

The Quebec university system has a deficit of $60 million. Concordia's accumulated deficit represents 29% of that figure though they educate just 12% of Quebec students.

Survey ...

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share," said ComputerScience student Francois Ennever.

At least one student, rushing out the door of the Liberal Arts College, was prepared to take CUSA's call to the word."Student strikes are ineffectual," he said. "Bomb the National Assembly!"

CUSA's constitution requires a quorum of 2.5 per cent of the University's 22,000 undergraduates to pass the resolution.

CUSA is urging students use the strike measure to make their voice heard in Quebec City.

"Radical actions call for radical responses," said Karen Takacs, co-president of the Concordia University Students' Association (CUSA).